

## [A Baptism That Didn't Take]

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FOLKLORE

NEW YORK Forms to be Filled out for Each Interview

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

ADDRESS 51 Bank St, New York City

DATE November 1, 1938

SUBJECT "BIG FRED" TELLS A TALE: "A BAPTISM THAT DIDN'T TAKE"

1. Date and time of interview

October 30, 1938

2. Place of interview on 14th Street, New York City

3. Name and address of informant

Fred Roys 113 Seventh Ave. New York City

4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant.

(See previous interview "Big Fred Tells a Tale" 9/16/38)

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5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you

6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

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FORM B Personal History of Informant

STATE New York

NAME OF WORKER Wayne Walden

ADDRESS 51 Bank St. New York City

DATE November 1, 1938

SUBJECT "BIG FRED" TELLS A TALE: "A BAPTISM THAT DIDN'T TAKE"

1. Ancestry Real American type.

2. Place and date of birth About 60 years old

3. Family

4. Places lived in, with dates

5. Education, with dates Common School

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Lumberjack, longshoreman, teamster.

7. Special skills and interests At present caretaker of building at 113 Seventh Ave. New York City.

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8. Community, and religious activities

9. Description of Informant Large and rugged.

10. Other Points gained in interview

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FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

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SUBJECT "BIG FRED" TELLS A TALE": "A BAPTISM THAT DIDN'T TAKE"

Several of us were standing in front of the "Crusader" on Fourteenth Street and our rather desultory conversation finally turned to "gettin' religion." It was then that big Fred opened up. Said he:

Them religious revivals they used to have, you don't see much of that sort of goings-on nowadays; but in them days they was great doin's. When I was a kid we used to look forward to 'em like we did the circus. Sometimes they was as good as a circus. It was a case of come to Jesus everybody. You had to come in or they'd hound the hell out of you if you didn't. The woods was full of Billy Sundays, and if you could stand out against their persuadin' you, you was a good one. You had to have what they call stamina. Generally when some of those old hens got a hold of a guy, he was a goner, 'cause the women then

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went into the revival business with both feet. When they took out after you, there wasn't much use a [runnin'?].

But there was one old codger they had a devil of a time a snarin! [snarin.?] He wouldn't fall for their bait at all. They tried every which way to get him, but old Rufe- - Rufus Gray his name was- - was one 2 guy they couldn't bring into the fold. He had read Bob ingersoll, I guess, and didn't seem to give a damn if his soul was saved or not. Pie in the sky couldn't move him. The chase went on for years, revival after revival, and still old Rufe couldn't be swayed from the paths of wickedness he preferred to travel. His soul was getting blacker and blacker with accumulatin' sins, but still the old cuss hung back. The stubborn old geeser seemed sure as hell-bound-for-hell, and the bettin' was odds against his ever being corraled.

Well, it finally happened that a revival came on and, whether the Bible-pounder was more convincin', or whether the sistern put on greater pressure in their persuadin' whatever it was, old Rufe- - maybe he thought it was better to get it over with, but anyhow the old guy shows signs of weakening. He give up arguin' and told 'em O-Kay, that he was ready to submit at last.

Well, of course, landin' a hardshell old sinner, the likes of him, caused a lot of rejoicing among the sistern and the brethren. It was a great triumph, something to holler about. All that was lacking now was the baptism. And for old Rufus it'd need more'n a little sprinkling. It'd need a whole damned puddle of water for him to be made pure and radiant!

The baptisings was most of the time done in a lake, about a mile and a half from town. The preacher, and whoever would be his helpers, would lead the converts out to where the water was about arm-pit deep, and then dip 'em under. That's what they done to old Rufe too- - they leads him out to where the water was up to his whiskers and then topples him under. But he wasn't countin' on being ducked.

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So he comes up sputtering, and pawing, and madder'n hell. Soon as he untangles himself from their hanging on to him, he starts out swimmin' to beat the devil himself, and when he gets out in about the middle of the lake he turns his head and hollers out-"Yeah, you would, would you? You'd try to drown somebody, would you? You gawd-damned fools."